

**Project Proposal @ 21 November 2019****Sonia Mangiapane LB2**

I define myself as a *photomedia*<sup>1</sup> artist; employing media and processes defined primarily by their use of light, as opposed to the exclusive use of the photographic apparatus. Guided by my fascination with the physical properties and ethereal qualities of light I explore concepts of journey, place and ecologies of time.

Previously I identified exclusively as a photographer, defining all aspects of my (public and private) practice through the lens of the camera. Access to a colour darkroom has facilitated a broader palette from which I create work, thereby opening up new possibilities for the creation of camera-less or lens-less light objects and interventions. Unsurprisingly, undertaking a masters course in Lens-based Media has also opened up my practice to new methods. Consequently, the title “photographer” feels like a straightjacket, and no longer accurately represents my practice.

The term *photomedia* creates space for new temporal and spatial explorations through moving image, light projection and installation work; as well as alternative approaches to works on photosensitive surfaces—by incorporating light-painting methods in the darkroom and cyanotypes for example. I feel I now have space in which my practice can evolve and grow.

**Process.**

Traditionally exposure time in photography is defined as the temporal gap between the shutter opening and closing: when a photograph is “taken”. In my practice, I would like to propose an alternative to this view; to offer a counterpoint to Henri Cartier-Bresson’s *decisive moment*. Taking the photograph is simply one part of my process; I consider the time the entire process takes—from the undertaking of a journey to the production of the final print in the darkroom—as the true exposure time in my work. This durational aspect feels important and speaks to the passage of time, as well as a passage *from, to* and *through* (physical and psychological) spaces.

In a sense, I undertake two journeys in my practice.

The real-world physical journey—as a traveller (commuter, emigrant, tourist)—provides the conditions for taking photographs. I tend to take photos in *other* places, in spaces away from my home space—elsewhere. Being somewhere else (in a place), or on the way to somewhere else (in a *non-place*<sup>2</sup>), is fertile ground for wandering thoughts, dreamlike states and reflection. This state of being provides the conditions in which I often feel compelled to take photographs. There is an oneiric quality to these moments that I want to translate into my work. The art that moves me most also speaks to such *magic*: that which lies beyond or in-between. *Magic* is that which cannot be easily explained through language alone; the causes of which are not immediately apparent. I believe this lies at the core of my motivation to make *art*.

Secondly, I undertake a journey-through-process during the production phase, which occurs mainly in the darkroom. Here my enduring fascination with light finds another form. This is a space in which I *make*, rather than *take* (a photograph); a space for play, experimentation and *thinking*—to borrow John Dunnigan’s term for “the union of critical making and critical thinking” (Dunnigan 2013, p.94). Like in my physical journeys there are comparable moments of wonder and contemplation here too.

**Context.**

Many artists work with experimental analogue photomedia techniques—Liz Nielsen, Nicolai Howalt, Walead Beshty, Chloe Sells, Adam Jeppesen, Daniel T. Blum, Garry Fabian Miller; to name a few. Like myself, it seems such artists are looking for a way to use photographic media to create something that is less about documentation of the world around us, as it is a new interaction with and interpretation of that world.

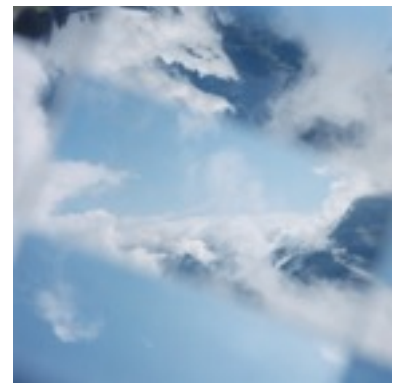
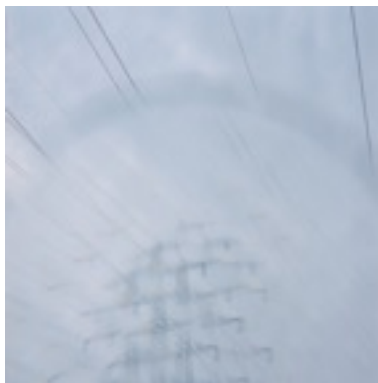
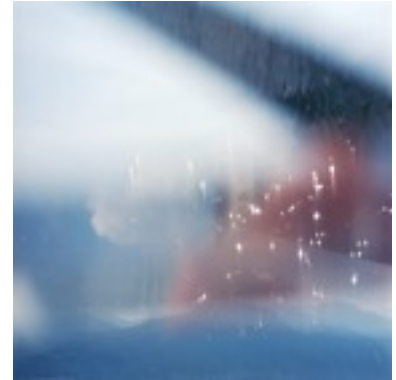
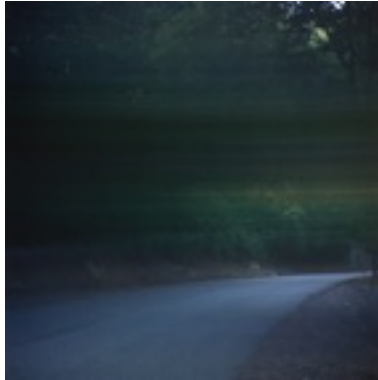
I feel an affinity with the goals of historical art movements such as Abstract Expressionism, the Bauhaus, Minimalism, Suprematism and artists who explore contemporary notions of the “sublime” (as loaded and unfashionable a term as that is) such as Guido van der Werve, James Turrell, Ryoji Ikeda and Anish Kapoor.

## Graduation Project – Possible Outcomes.

For my graduation project a combination of three possible outcomes present themselves—photographic prints, moving images and installation—creating a unified body of work in which individual artworks enter into a dialogue with each other.

### 1. Photographs and Photographic Prints

During my (European) summer break I travelled (as a tourist) for leisure and to meet with loved ones. I experimented with photographing the landscape through prisms to distort what I saw through the camera lens. This material, in combination with photographs I took last year, will form my starting point for an exhibition of prints.



Until now I have worked to a maximum scale of 30x40cm in the darkroom, using pre-cut sheets of photographic paper. I plan to increase the scale of my analogue photographic prints by working from a 30 inch (width) by 50 metre (length) roll increasing not only the physical scale (therefore immersive potential) of my work, but the technical degree of difficulty. As I am using the darkroom located at the Willem de Kooning Academy (WdKA) I will require the assistance and co-operation of the Image and Sound Station Instructors, Menno Boer and Jeroen de Wijs, for facilities maintenance and technical advice. For specialised analogue colour printing techniques I can also reach out to Peter Svensen—owner of Amsterdam photo lab Aap-lab, artist, and expert in analogue colour printing techniques.

N.B. For a detailed description of working methods please refer to my Essay on Method: *What Does It Take to Make a Contemporary Practice? : An Extended Essay*. <https://pzwiki.wdka.nl/mediadesign/Sonia/essayonmethod>

### 2. Moving Image

Increasingly, I am incorporating the moving image into my practice. In addition to the production of */ \ / Pendulum*, an experimental short film I made earlier this year, I have shot short clips with my phone to *sketch* out ideas or capture moments that benefit from the longer duration of video. The introduction of moving image creates another temporal dimension within my work. This has the potential to create a space for contemplation in the

mind of the viewer, creating a comparable moment of wonder to the one I experience on my various aforementioned journeys.

Recently, I've recorded slow motion sequences featuring reflections of street lamps on a water surface at night. The result is abstract—achieved through tight cropping, high contrast imagery and temporal distortion (due to the use of slow motion). It's difficult to make out if the subject matter is naturally occurring or digitally generated—I like this. My hope is that, although the viewer may not be able to discern exactly what they're looking at, their attention is arrested by the hypnotic effect. The working title for this work is *Internal Reflection*—a play on the literal and metaphoric meanings of the words. (N.B. link to example: <https://www.instagram.com/p/B3kiLFdFyRq/>)

In the coming month I plan to purchase a compact camera with high speed capture capabilities (Sony RX100 VII) and use the 2020 *Eye Research Labs* project to develop my ideas further.

### 3. Installation/Light Objects

Similarly, I believe incorporating an installation component can fulfil the same function as that of moving image i.e. to create a space for contemplation. However, the form that it will take remains open, and I must admit that I question if I am straying too far—from my centre, my comfort zone, my strengths. At the moment I'm considering light projections or an optical or kinetic object, using light altering materials and surfaces—plastic film, mirrors, prisms, lenses, water for example—set in motion through mechanical means. I look toward the work of artists who create (kinetic and fixed) light objects such as Alberto Biasi, Karl Gertsner and Dieter Jung.

I realise that in order to develop these ideas further dedicated time for experimentation and prototyping is imperative. To work towards that goal, I plan to book one of the private studios in the WdKA Drawing Station for a period of concentrated practice-based research. I also want to learn how to make a simple rotating motor and experiment with 3D printing in order to facilitate the mechanical aspects of installation work or for carrying out dark-room interventions at the printing stage. For technical assistance I will consult Javier Lloret (artist, PZI tutor and WdKA Interaction Station instructor) as incorporating these new elements requires an expansion of my current skillset.

#### Footnotes.

1. "The photographic devices that fall under the term photomedia are as broad as the etymological scope of the words photographic and media. Essentially I consider all devices that use light and media as photomedia including photography, cinema, video, television, mobile phones, computers and photocopiers" (McKenzie, 2014, p.1).
2. In *Non-Places: An Introduction to an Anthology of Super Modernity*, Marc Augé defines *non-places* as places we pass through, usually on the way to our destination; spaces that are devoid of emotional attachment or meaningful connections. Examples of *non-places* include airports, motorways, shopping complexes, hotels and trains.

#### References.

- Augé, M. (1995) *Non-places: introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity*. London; New York: Verso.
- Dunnigan, John. (2013) 'Thinking'. In *The Art of Critical Making Rhode Island School of Design on Creative Practice*, Hoboken, N.J: Wiley, 94–115. <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:101:1-2015021011041> (November 4, 2019).
- McKenzie, J. (2014) *Light and photomedia: a new history and future of the photographic image*. London: I.B. Taurus.

#### Bibliography.

Please see Thesis Outline.